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ABSTRACT

The outline for a reading course based on both intensive and extensive reading of short stories is presented. The 11-week course focuses on five stories, three selected by the teacher and two selected by the students as a class. A course overview details the sequence of reading and classroom activities, and the procedures for a typical four-week story unit are also specified. Each unit includes pre-reading activities, several options for text reading, a comprehension check, a discussion of literary issues (setting, character, plot), a session devoted to literature discussion circles, and extending activities such as role play, dialogue writing, debate, or discussion and special writing assignment. Additional materials include a sample exercise for one story, procedures for a literary circle, directions for student journal entry writing, notes on the evaluation of journals, procedures for keeping a vocabulary log, and directions for a concluding independent reading project. Contains 22 references and a list of potential stories for classroom use. (MSE)

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ED 431 335

# A Student-Centered Short Story Curriculum

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**1. Course Overview**

**2. Overview of a Typical Unit**

- **Pre-reading**
- **Reading**
- **Post-reading comprehension**
- **Literary Focus**
- **Literature Circles**
- **Extending Activity**

**3. Reading Journal & Vocabulary Log**

**4. Independent Reading Project**

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33rd Annual TESOL Convention
New York, NY
March 12, 1999

Stefan Frazier

# ALI Mini-course – American Short Stories – Spring 1999

Instructor: Stefan Frazier – stefann@sfsu.edu

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## I. COURSE GOALS

- To experience the reading of literature as an active and social process
- To learn to read *intensively* (for critical analysis) and *extensively* (for pleasure and language-learning)
- To understand that the interpretation of literature depends on your personal background, and that interpretations are open-ended (each reader might have a different one)
- To draw connections between literature and your own life
- To learn some common terms used in the analysis of literature (character, setting, plot and irony)
- To practice reading, writing, listening and speaking

## II. COURSE CONTENT

There are 5 stories scheduled for in-class work. There will be 2 weeks (4 days) for each story, as follows:

| Week | Content |
|---|---|
| 1-2 | "Sunday in the Park" by Bel Kaufman |
| 3-4 | "Samuel" by Grace Paley |
| 5-6 | "Can-can" by Arturo Vivante |
| 7-8 | Open story #1 (see below) |
| 9-10 | Open story #2 (see below) |
| 11 | Independent reading project presentations/other (see other side) |

Open stories: The class will choose 2 stories from the following list to read in weeks 7-10:

"Thank you, M'am" by Langston Hughes
"The First Job" by Sandra Cisneros
"Hills Like White Elephants" by Ernest Hemingway
"The Rules of the Game" by Amy Tan
"The Somebody" by Danny Santiago
"The Idea" by Raymond Carver

Sometime before week 7, I will give you a handout with a brief description of the six stories. You will then rank the stories in the order of preference (from 1 to 6). The class will read the two stories that get the highest ratings.

## III. COURSE EXPECTATIONS and GRADES. I will explain the following in the first day of class.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | **READING & VOCABULARY JOURNAL.** | 25% of semester grade |
| 2. | **LITERATURE CIRCLES.** | 25% " |
| 3. | **CLASS ASSIGNMENTS.** | 25% " |
| 4. | **INDEPENDENT READING PROJECT.** | 25% " |



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## Course Overview

| Wk | Tuesday | Thursday |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Intro to literature & short stories<br>Pre-read: "Samuel"<br>HW: Read "Samuel" | Discuss reading notebook<br>Literary Focus: Plot |
| 2 | Literature Circles<br>Introduce Independent Reading Projects (handout & discussion) | Extending activity: Creative Writing |
| 3 | Pre-read: "Sunday in the Park"<br>Present Ss w/list of 6 "Open" stories<br>HW: Read "Samuel" | Post-reading: "Sunday in the Park"<br>Literary Focus: Characterization<br>HW: Prepare for Lit Circles |
| 4 | Literature Circles | Extending activity: Role Play |
| 5 | Pre-read "Can-Can"<br>Present story as listening activity<br>Comprehension Check<br>HW: Read "Can-Can" | Post-reading: "Can-Can"<br>Literary Focus: Irony |
| 6 | Literature Circles | Extending Activity: Debate |
| 7 | Pre-read Story #4 (Ss' choice)<br>HW: Read Story #4 | Post-reading: Story #4<br>Literary Focus: Story #4 |
| 8 | Literature Circles | Extending Activity: Story #4 |
| 9 | Pre-read: Story #5 | Literary Focus: Story #5 |
| 10 | Literature Circles | Extending activity: Story #5 |
| 11 | Reports independent reading | Course Wrap-up |

# A Typical 2-Week Story Unit

| Tuesday | Thursday |
|---|---|
| DAY 1<br><br>**Pre-reading options:**<br>• preview/discussion of setting<br>• graphic representation of opening scene w/discussion<br>• introduce crucial vocabulary/build cultural schema<br>• write before you read<br><br>**Reading options:**<br>• in class<br>— aloud (teacher)<br>— silently (Ss)<br>• at home<br><br>**Comprehension Check**<br>(or checked on DAY 2 of the unit)<br>• surface comprehension Qs<br>• deeper interpretive questions, leading to literary focus | DAY 2<br><br>**Literary focus**<br>(setting, character, plot, etc.):<br>• process questions on literary focus<br>• discuss literary element w/thematic reference |
| DAY 3<br><br>**Literature Circles** | DAY 4<br><br>**Extending activities**<br>• role play<br>• dialog writing (e.g., characters from different stories meet)<br>• debate<br>• discussion leading to special writing assignment |

## FOCUS ON CHARACTER — "SUNDAY IN THE PARK"

1. Read the list of *descriptive adjectives* on the next page. Put each adjective under the character that it best describes. (Write them under "Description".) You can use the same adjective to describe more than one character if necessary.

2. Look back at the story. Find *evidence* to support the adjective that you listed under "Description" and write it under "Evidence from the Story". (Hint: you can quote a description of the character from the story or describe the character's actions

3. Be prepared to discuss how the character's actions supported their description.

| Characters | Description | Evidence from the Story |
|---|---|---|
| Morton | thin | "his fine, lean face" (para. 1) |
| Morton's wife | | |
| Larry, Morton's little boy | | |
| Joe, a little boy | | |
| Joe's father | | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| intelligent | polite | weak |
| strong | pleasant | irritated |
| crude | sensitive | scornful |
| reasonable | afraid | chubby |
| loving | thin | content |

## LITERATURE CIRCLES

1. To deepen your understanding of the stories we are reading, and to give you practice in expressing and defending your opinions about the stories, you will meet in small groups of 4–5, called "**literature circles**," to discuss each story.

2. Each person will have a specific **role** to play in the group discussion and will need to prepare a product to copy and share with the group.

3. There are **five roles**. Each student will take a different role with each story.

   - Discussion Director**:** writes down three or four questions for discussion by the group and acts as the time-keeper for the group. The questions should help group members understand and interpret the stories in insightful ways. The Discussion Director should help avoid confusion. **Product: a list of questions for discussion**

   - Plot Summarizer: prepares a brief summary of the plot and reads it to the group. The summary should be clear, complete, and accurate and it should focus on key events that are central to the story. **Product: a written summary of key story events**

   - Graphic Organizer: prepares a graphic (picture, chart, idea map, etc.) of some or all of the key concepts or events from the story. **Product: a graphic**

   - Word Wizard: selects five words that are central to the story and present them to the group in some creative way that will help the group learn them. For example, you can make a multiple choice quiz or cloze quiz, or a crossword puzzle or other game that the group can do, or you can use the words in some other creative way, such as to tell a short-short story of your own. **Product: a vocabulary activity using five words**

   - Passage Picker: locates three short selections from the story to read aloud to the group. The idea is to help people remember the most interesting, powerful, and important sections from the story. **Product: 3 typed or Xeroxed selections with space for the group to respond to 1 selection in writing**

4. You will meet in your Literature Circles four times during the semester (to discuss stories 2–5). Each member will have **five minutes** to report on the work prepared for the group, while the other members take notes. Then the Discussion Director will lead a 15-20 minute discussion on the story. Be prepared!

5. At the end of the discussion, group members will give me their work for review.

*Adapted from Lydia Stack: Gajdusek et al. (March, 1998). Literature for language teaching. Paper presented at the 32nd Annual TESOL Conference, Seattle, WA.*

## DIRECTIONS FOR READING JOURNALS

1. For each story, pick one passage (a sentence, group of sentences, or whole paragraph) that you find particularly interesting, funny, depressing, enlightening, insightful, sad, joyful, or otherwise thought-provoking.

2. Copy that passage out of the text into your notebook.

3. Beneath the passage, write your own comment about how the passage affects you personally and about its connection to your own life.

4. If you choose to analyze a literary point: you might, for instance, outline what actions happen in the story, how the action rises, where the climax is, and how the action falls (this is an analysis of plot). Or, you might draw a plot line.

5. Write as much as you want, but try for at least one page. Handwriting is fine. Do not worry about spelling, grammar, punctuation, or organization — the journal is all a freewrite.

Take a look at the next page for a sample journal entry.

I will collect the journals every other week to read and respond to. *If there is any part of your journal entry that you feel is TOO PRIVATE for me to read, please fold over that page with a note asking me not to read it; I promise you that I won't.*

THESE JOURNAL ENTRIES ARE REQUIRED. REMEMBER TO WRITE AT LEAST ONE ENTRY PER STORY.

## READING JOURNAL EVALUATION

+ You have responded to a passage in the story by making insightful connections to your own life or have analyzed a literary element well (for example, character, setting, plot, etc.).

√ You have responded adequately to a passage in the story. Your response could use more explanation or detail in its analysis.

**Redo** You have either not responded to a passage in the story, responded inadequately, responded to the story in general, or responded to other issues.

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## VOCABULARY LOG

In your vocabulary log you will record words (or expressions) from the story that you want to learn. **YOU SHOULD RECORD AT LEAST FIVE WORDS PER STORY.**

Start the vocabulary log in the back of your reading journal. When you find a word you would like to remember and use, record it in your vocabulary log by taking these steps:

1. *Write* the word on the right-hand page of your log.

2. *Copy* the sentence or the phrase in which the word or expression appears and the page and line number of the story.

3. Look up the word (or expression) in an **English–English** learner's dictionary:
   - Write down the *definition* that makes sense in the context of the passage.
   - If the entry is one word, write down its *part of speech* (and, if it's a noun, whether it is count or noncount).
   - If you wish, write down the word's pronunciation using phonetic symbols.

4. If you like, make a *sketch* or *drawing* of the new word or expression.

5. If you don't feel 100 percent sure of the word's definition, you can write the translation in your own language.

6. If your dictionary provides them, write down any *phrases* or *expressions* that the word appears with. (For example, the word "catch" may appear in the " catch the bus", "catch a cold", "catch a ball", or "catch a fish.")

7. On the left side of the spiral bound page, write any *synonyms* you can find.

8. Underline the word you have entered, the word in the sentence from the story, the definition and any synonyms you've included. Underlining these parts will help you review the words more easily when you skim through your notebook.

Look at the sample entries on the next page.

**REMEMBER TO WRITE DOWN AT LEAST FIVE WORDS PER STORY.**

## American Short Stories
# Independent Reading Project

You are required for this class to do 20 pages of reading outside of what we're reading and discussing together in class. This assignment is meant to encourage you to become an independent reader of literature.

Throughout the rest of the term, I will hand you 4 short assignments to complete about your stories:

1. Focus on setting

2. Focus on character

3. Focus on plot

4. As a final assignment (due the final week of class), you may choose to:
   a. write a short (2–3 page) story report
   b. give a short (3–5 minute) review presentation to the class

I will give you more information about the short and final assignments once you have chosen your story or stories.

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On the following pages is a long list of stories to choose from. The stories are organized by topic and include short descriptions. Choose one or more stories, but remember the 20-page minimum! *Of course, you may choose any story that is not on this list, too.*

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Please fill out the "WHAT ARE YOU READING?" sheet and hand it to me in the next class.

**American Short Stories**
# Independent Reading Project

Name: .....

Story Title: .....

Author: .....

## Characters

1. Who are the characters? List characters by name and include any details that you can from the story that tell the reader something about their personalities. You can include things such as physical appearance, age, profession, thoughts, speech or actions. (Use the other side of this sheet if necessary.) Look especially at *adjectives*.

2. For the following questions, choose ONE of your stories:

   a. Choose one question:

      If there are several characters in the story, which is your favorite? Why?

      **OR**

      If there was only one character did you like the character or find that person interesting? Why or why not?

   b. Imagine that one of the characters in the story were to meet a character from one of the stories we have read in class. Would they get along well? Would they argue? Explain.



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* Includes "Sunday in the Park" by Bel Kaufman.

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## Independent Reading Project — Story Bank

| *TITLE* | *AUTHOR* | *PAGES** |
|---|---|---|
| **A Day's Wait** | Ernest Hemingway | 3 |
| **A Short Digest of a Long Novel** | Budd Schulberg | 3 |
| **A Sound of Thunder** | Ray Bradbury | 10 |
| **A White Man's World** | Debra Swallow | 3 |
| **A Worn Path** | Eudora Welty | 6 1/2 |
| **And the Soul Shall Dance** | Wakako Yamauchi | 6 1/2 |
| **Blue Winds Dancing** | Thomas S. Whitecloud | 3+ |
| **Butch Minds the Baby** | Damon Runyon | 12 1/2 |
| **Can-Can** | Arturo Vivante | 2 |
| **Cathedral** | Raymond Carver | 19 |
| **Eleven** | Sandra Cisneros | 2 |
| **Eye Witness** | Ed McBain | 3 |
| **Gaston** | William Saroyan | 8 |
| **In the Land of the Free** | Sui Sin Far | 7 |
| **Like a Winding Sheet** | Ann Petry | 8 |
| **Long Walk to Forever** | Kurt Vonnegut, Jr. | 6 |
| **Love** | Jesse Stuart | 3 |
| **Of Missing Persons** | Jack Finney | 14 |
| **Orientation** | Daniel Orozco | 6 |
| **Raymond's Run** | Toni Cade Bambara | 7 1/2 |
| **Secrets** | Judy Troy | 6+ |
| **Snow** | Anne Beattie | 2 |
| **Survivor** | John Dennis | 8 |
| **The Bass, the River, & Sheila Mant** | W. D. Wetherell | 6 1/2 |
| **The Filipino & the Drunkard** | William Saroyan | 3 |
| **The Standard of Living** | Dorothy Parker | 5 1/2 |
| **The Stone Boy** | Gina Berriault | 10 |
| **The Storm** | Kate Chopin | 4 |
| **The Story of an Hour** | Kate Chopin | 2 1/2 |
| **The Struggle to Be an All-American Girl** | Elizabeth Wong | 1 |
| **The Tell-Tale Heart** | Edgar Allen Poe | 4 |
| **Tito's Good-bye** | Cristina Garcia | 3 |
| **Your Place Is Empty** | Anne Tyler | 21 |

** page numbers vary depending on the edition*



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